

Ch 100

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To: SRP

Providing Estimative Resources

If it is granted that to supply estimates is a central role of an intelligence agency, that too small a part of NFAC's output is at present estimative, and that estimates not stimulated by salient foreign events represent a still smaller proportion, then the question arises of why this vital function is being relatively neglected.

The cause may reside in unfavorable conditions of demand or supply. I have dealt with the demand side in two previous memos to SRP. In the present one I turn to problems on the supply side.

Once a subject has been selected or laid on, concept, information, analysis (including informed projection) and integrative composition are the required inputs. Assuming, for purposes of this discussion, that NFAC is a repository of sufficient information, raw and processed--thus providing the necessary building blocks--the key input comes down to people who possess conceptual and analytical sophistication and the compositional skill for writing an arresting estimate.

To provide these resources, and insure their productive use, is a matter of recruitment and training, work incentives, allocation and organization. I will take these up one by one.

I do not know to what extent the key human resources are actually or potentially available in NFAC and, therefore, whether outside recruitment is an important or marginal requirement. If there are enough in-house analysts commanding the required skills, recruitment is reduced to a question of incentives, that is of inducing such people to turn to estimative projects, especially those not related to the salient international incidents of the moment. Self-generated incentives aside, an adequate incentive structure must center on personal recognition for work well done, career advancement, and the expectation of a work experience that minimizes frustration in terms of undue interruption and delays and unconstructive criticism.

However, because the volume of the estimative work in operation has been small for some considerable time, it seems probable that the NFAC supply of fully competent analysts and writers is at present not large enough to sustain a significantly larger output of quality. To that extent, then, the problem is one of discovering, recruiting, and training potential talent already at NFAC. The act of internal recruitment again depends on offering the incentives discussed above. Once proper incentives are operational, self-recruitment probably is the most fruitful mechanism of discovery. Training is a critical function inasmuch as most work performed by analysts, though making valuable contributions to intelligence production, does not necessarily foster the crucial skills demanded by broadly and deeply estimative work. Specific training in these skills must evidently come mostly from analysts and supervisory personnel already commanding them.

Once a number of suitable people is on hand, suitable members must be allocated to particular estimative tasks and sufficiently protected from the intrusion of competing tasks (normally short-term and urgent) that interface with concentration on their estimative assignment and entails delay. This does not mean that analyst-writers are unable to perform other tasks in the interstices of time when the process of review and coordination makes no claim or no major claim on them. But the timely and protected allocation of suitable personnel to particular estimative jobs is clearly a prime condition of good performance and should be granted corresponding priority.

The problem of improving NFAC's estimative performance is also a question of bureaucratic organization. At this point I do not want to explore solutions that would call for major reorganization in NFAC, but rather examine methods capable of being fitted into the present structure.

Three possible approaches to a solution look interesting from this point of view:

- (1) Associating analyst-writers with the NIOs;
- (2) Establishing a pool of analyst-writers in the relevant offices;
- (3) Recruiting and assigning analyst-writers on an ad hoc basis, as is being done presently.

Recruitment and training, motivation and firm job assignment are obviously criteria by which these options should be evaluated. However, there are two additional ones: first, ready access to information and specialized knowledge in NFAC's offices; and second, especially with reference to estimates of a regional or global span, the ability of the analyst-writer to interact with competent colleagues for the discussion of conceptual, analytical and estimative problems.

(Note: The following is more tentative and less informed than the foregoing because my appreciation of organizational capacities and problems is still very limited and vague).

(1) Although they have several competing tasks, NIOs are also meant to be in charge of producing or managing major estimates. In this respect, they seem to differ greatly in preferred practice and mode of operation. But as a group, they seem to have experienced difficulties about recruiting suitable analyst-writers from the offices because competent staff was either unavailable or pre-empted for other tasks deemed to be more urgent. To have some personnel suitable for writing estimates on their staff (as some NIOs apparently do) would remedy this problem, and to provide such extra staff may therefore be regarded as a major or partial solution to the larger problem, provided the processes of training and motivation are being satisfied. Whether the problem of firm assignment can be solved at this level depends on the relation between the number of estimative tasks facing the NIO and the number of competent people working for him. Whether this solution would assure adequate access to estimative office resources I am unable to tell. One disadvantage of this approach to a solution may result from the difficulty of providing the analyst-writer with stimulative, supportive and critical, group interaction. The fact that there are gaps between the estimative processes of the NIOs is another disadvantage.

(2) The creation of a small pool of competent analyst-writers in relevant offices (e.g., in OPA for primarily political estimates) could be made to meet all criteria. This approach would also provide

a capability for engaging in estimative work of a regional, inter-regional and global character.

(3) The ad hoc method practiced at present could also work provided the functions of recruitment, training, motivation and firm assignment are properly performed. It is, however, a solution less supportive in terms of providing a group of trained analyst-writers with which the chosen writer can productively interact.

It is evident from this discussion that the question of bureaucratic organization, although important, is secondary to the basic functional requirements regarding recruitment, training, motivation and firm assignment.

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